

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PRS-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /085 W

----- 079471

P R 081600Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6043

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC

USSAG NKP THAILAND

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 6479

NOFORN

SECDEF FOR DIA

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS/ MILI MOPS MCAP CB

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST ATTACKS ON ROUTE 4

1. SUMMARY. USING FORCES DRAWN PRINCIPALLY FROM THE KAMPOT BATTLEFIELD, THE KC BETWEEN MAY 1 AND MAY 8 SEIZED CONTROL OF 35 KILOMETER SECTION OF SOUTHERN ROUTE 4 NORTHEAST OF FANK'S AIR AND NAVAL BASES AT REAM AND THE SEAPORT OF KOMPONG SOM. FANK LOST ELEVEN OUT-POSTS INCLUDING TWO 105MM HOWITZER POSITIONS BUT THEY HAVE NOW REINFORCED THEIR SOUTHERMOST FORCES WITH TWO BATTALIONS FROM KAMPOT AND ARE CONSOLIDATING POSITIONS NORTH OF THE CUT. FOLLOWING THE RECENT PATTERN, THE ENEMY APPEARS ONCE MORE TO HAVE SHIFTED FORCES FROM WHAT HAD BECOME A LOW YIELD AREA TO MORE PROMISING TARGETS, SCORING SOME INTIAL SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGING AGAIN FANK'S MOBILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGINNING ON MAY 1, KC FORCES SEIZED CONTROL OF A

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SECTOR OF ROUTE 4 EXTENDING FROM TOEK THLA, SOME NINE KILOMETERS EAST OF THE KAF BASE AT REAM, THIRTY-FIVE

KILOMETERS NORTHWARD TO THE BRIDGE OVER THE TA NEY RIVER. THE KC HAVE ALSO INTERDICTED A SECOND SHORTER SECTION FURTHER NORTH ON ROUTE 4 WHERE THE ROAD TURNS EASTWARD AT KAAONG.

3. THERE WERE ELEVEN FANK OUTPOSTS SPREAD OUT ALONG ROUTE 4 BETWEEN TOEK THLA AND THE TA NEY BRIDGE. THEY WERE MANNED BY PLATOON AND COMPANY-SIZED TERRITORIAL UNITS TOTALLING APPROXIMATELY 800 MEN. DURING THE PERIOD MAY 1-8 COMMUNIST FORCES EXERTED VARYING DEGREES OF PRESSURE UPON EACH POSITION, IN TURN. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE FORCES CONSISTED OF THREE BATTALIONS DIVERTED FROM THE ABORTIVE ASSAULT UPON KAMPOT PLUS PROBABLY AT LEAST TWO OTHER REGIONAL BATTALIONS.

4. ACCORDING TO THE STILL-FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US, SEVERAL OF THE SMALLER OUTPOSTS APPARENTLY FELL WITH LITTLE OR NO RESISTANCE. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN OUTPOSTS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN NEGLIGIBLE AND CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR MUTUAL REINFORCEMENT IN CASE OF ATTACK NON-EXISTENT. POOR DISCIPLINE AND A LOW STATE OF READINESS SEEMS TO HAVE PREVAILED THROUGHOUT. THE TERRITORIALS PUT UP STIFFER RESISTANCE AT O CHAMNA, VEAL REANH AND PREY NOP, HOWEVER, IN THE FACE OF CONCERTED COMMUNIST GROUND AND MORTAR ATTACKS.

5. IN ORDER TO COUNTER COMMUNIST PRESSURE ON THE SOUTHERN END OF THE CUT AND STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSES OF THE REAM AIR BASE ONLY NINE KILOMETERS AWAY, FANK MOVED TWO BATTALIONS FROM KAMPOT TO REAM ON MAY 6. IN ADDITION, DURING THE EIGHT-DAY PERIOD, KAF FLEW THREE AC-47, FIFTY-THREE T-28, NINE AU24 AND TWENTY HUEY GUNSHIP SORTIES IN SUPPORT OF THE BESEIGED OUTPOSTS. DESPITE THIS EFFORT, VEAL RENH FELL ON MAY 4, O CHAMNA ON MAY 7, AND PREY NOP ON MAY 8. ALL ELEVEN OF THE OUTPOSTS HAVE NOW FALLEN.

6. TWO OTHER OUTPOSTS ON THE CUT FURTHER NORTH AT KAAONG WERE REPORTED TO BE CUT OFF TODAY. THIS AFTERNOON

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THE FANK HIGH COMMAND DECIDED TO EVACUATE THESE POSITIONS AS WELL, AND DIRECT THE EVACUEES TO PROCEED TO KOMPONG SEILA NORTHEAST ON ROUTE 4. THE HIGH COMMAND FURTHER DECIDED TO CONSOLIDATE OUTPOSTS AROUND KOMPONG SEILA IN ANTICIPATION OF A COMMUNIST ATTACK IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

7. CHMEDTC AND DATT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE HIGH COMMAND THIS AFTERNOON REVEAL THAT FANK IS RELUCTANT, AT THIS POINT, TO PULL ITS FORCES BACK FROM KOMPONG SEILA TO

DAS ANCHOR, TWENTY-FIVE KILOMETERS SOUTH-
WEST OF KOMPONG SPEU ON ROUTE 4. INSTEAD, THE DECISION HAS BEEN
MADE TO ATTEMPT TO RELIEVE ANTICIPATED COMMUNIST

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6044

INFO SECDEF

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 6479

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PRESSURE ON KOMPONG SEILA BY INITIATING A THREE-BATTALION
OPERATION ON ROUTE 4 BETWEEN DAS KANCHOR AND
KOMPONG SPEU.

8. TWO 105MM HOWITZERS WERE LOCATED AT VEAL RENH AND
ANOTHER TWO WERE AT O CHAMNA. WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO
ASCERTAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWO HOWITZERS AT VEAL
RENH. WE ARE NOT INCLINED TO ACCEPT THE UNCONFIRMED
STATEMENTS OF SOME SURVIVORS THAT THE PIECES WERE
DESTROYED PRIOR TO EVACUATION OF THE OUTPOST. IN OUR
JUDGEMENT, IT IS MORE THAN LIKELY THAT THEY ARE NOW IN
COMMUNIST HANDS. KAF T-28S BOMBED THE 105 POSITIONS
AT O CHAMNA ON MAY 7 AND THE PILOTS CLAIM THAT THEY
DESTROYED AT LEAST ONE OF THE HOWITZERS. 105MM
AMMUNITION AT THE POSITION APPARENTLY WAS HIT BECAUSE
NUMEROUS SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS WERE OBSERVED.

9. THE KC APPARENTLY CONCLUDED NEAR THE END OF APRIL

THAT THE EFFECTIVE, IF SLOW, FANK BUILDUP AND DEFENSE
AT KAMPOT MADE IT UNLIKELY THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE
TO TAKE THE CITY. THE SUCCESS OF THE FANK 28TH
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BRIGADE OPERATIONS SOUTHEAST OF KAMPOT WHICH RESULTED
IN THE REOPENING OF THE RIVERINE SUPPLY ROUTE INTO
THE CITY PROBABLY CONFIRMED THIS DECISION. THE
WIDELY-DISPERSED AND ILL-PREPARED OUTPOSTS ON ROUTE 4
PRESENTED THE KC WITH A NEARBY TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY
COMPLETE WITH FOUR EASY-TO-COME-BY 105MM HOWITZERS.
THE OPERATION ALSO PROMISED GOOD POSITIONS FROM WHICH
TO THREATEN THE REAM AIR BASE AND KOMPONG SOM. THE
LOWER ROUTE 4 OPERATION WOULD THUS APPEAR TO BE
ANOTHER KC SHIFT OF FORCES FROM AN UNSUCCESSFUL
BATTLEFIELD TO A MORE PROMISING TARGET. IT HAS
PRODUCED SOME INITIAL REWARDS AND CONSTITUTES ANOTHER
SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO FANK'S MOBILITY.

10. LOOKING FURTHER AHEAD AND FROM A BROADER STRATEGIC
STANDPOINT, THE KC MAY SEE THE CURRENT OPERATIONS AS
A MEANS BY WHICH IT MAY BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO INTER-
DICT ROUTE 4 AT ITS SOUTHERN END WITH FEWER FORCES
THAN THE NINE BATTALIONS CURRENTLY COMMITTED TO THE
CUT FURTHER NORTH ON THE HIGHWAY SOUTHWEST OF KOMPONG
SPEU. THIS WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO DIVERT THE NINE
BATTALIONS TO OTHER MORE IMPORTANT TARGETS IN THE
WEEKS AHEAD.

11. IN MEETINGS WITH THE HIGH COMMAND DURING THE
PAST SEVERAL DAYS, WE CONTINUED TO INSIST THAT
ALL 105S SHOULD BE GIVEN BETTER PROTECTION. AS A
RESULT, FANK YESTERDAY ORDERED THAT ALL 105S MUST
BE RELOCATED TO POSITIONS WHERE THEY CAN
BE PROTECTED BY AT LEAST ONE BATTALION-SIZED UNIT.
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